

Methods of Gathering Information for Evaluations

A Comparison

Method	Overall Purpose	Advantages	Challenges
Observation	To gather accurate information about how a program operates; focus on processes and behaviors	View operations of program as they are actually occurring; can adapt to events as they occur	Can be difficult to interpret behaviors; categorizing behaviors is complex; can influence behavior of participants
Review of partner's documentation/ test scores	To gain objective and quantifiable information	Get comprehensive data; does not interrupt client or volunteer; data already exists; few biases about information	Need to be clear about exactly what you are looking for; may not apply to situation; data is not flexible
Questionnaires, surveys and checklists	To quickly and easily get lots of information in a non-threatening way	Anonymity; inexpensive and easy to administer; many samples exist; easy to gather information	Wording can bias responses; can be impersonal; does not get the full story
Interviews	To fully understand someone's experience or to follow up on questionnaire/surveys	Get full range and depth of feedback; can develop a relationship with client; can be flexible in interview methods for different demographics	Time consuming; interviewer biases; hard to analyze objectively